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PERMANENT COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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Written Testimony of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women Before the Select Committee on Children Thursday, February 23, 2006

Re:

SB 202 AAC School Breakfast Programs

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women thanks the committee for this opportunity to provide written testimony regarding the above-referenced proposals.

SB 202 AAC School Breakfast Programs

PCSW supports the passage of SB 202, implementing a pilot-program to offer assistance through a competitive grant program to ten, severe-need schools in the provision of school breakfast in the classroom.

Students who have school breakfast eat more fruits, drink more milk, and consume less saturated fat than those who don't eat breakfast or have breakfast at home.¹ Furthermore, girls in food insecure households have a significantly lower risk of being overweight if they participate in any or all of the food-assistance programs, including

¹ Basiotis, P., Lino, M., & Anand, R. (1999). Eating breakfast greatly improves schoolchildren's diet quality. *Nutrition Insights: A Publication of the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion*, 15.

School Lunch, School Breakfast, and Food Stamps.² Given the alarming increase in obesity among children, that poor nutrition in childhood and adolescence causes osteoporosis, and the conclusive link between nutrition and wellness, making healthy meals readily accessible to students is critical.³

Studies have shown the conclusive benefits of eating breakfast for school achievement. Students who eat breakfast show an increase in math and reading scores,⁴ as well as make fewer mistakes and work faster in math and number checking tests when eating a complete breakfast versus a partial breakfast.⁵ Additionally, students who participate in school breakfast programs improve their math grades⁶ and schools that serve breakfast to all students in the classroom show increases in standardized test scores.⁷ Finally, a decrease in absence and tardiness and improved behavior were noted among students upon initiation of the universalized breakfast program.⁶

The School Breakfast Program is underutilized despite its importance. Stigma associated with participation in a school breakfast program, as well as time constraints associated with getting children to school early for breakfast have been suggested as

² Jones, S., Jahns, L., Laraia, B., & Haughton, B. (2003). Lower risk of overweight in school-aged food insecure girls who participate in food assistance. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 157:780-784.

³ e.g., Etherington, J, et al. (1996). The Effect of Weight-Bearing Exercise on Bone Mineral Density: A Study of Female Ex-Elite Athletes and the General Population. *Journal of Bone and Mineral Research*, 11 (9): 1333-8; Recker, R. (1993). Prevention of Osteoporosis: Calcium Nutrition. *Osteoporosis International*, 3 (Suppl 1): 163-5.

⁴ Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning. *School Breakfast Programs Energizing the Classroom*. Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, Roseville, MN.

⁵ Wyon, D., Abrahamsson, L., Jartelius, M., & Fletcher, R. (1997). An experimental study of the effects of energy intake at breakfast on the test performance of 10 year-old children in school. *International Journal of Food Science and Nutrition*, 48 (1): 5-12.

⁶ Murphy, J., et al. (1998). The relationship of school breakfast to psychosocial and academic functioning. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 152: 899-907.

⁷ Murphy, J. et al. (2001). *Maryland Meals for Achievement Year III Final Report*. Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA.

explanations for the programs' underutilization. However, participation has been shown to increase when the school breakfast program moves to the classroom and is implemented universally, especially among nutritionally vulnerable and impoverished students.⁸

Given the significant impact of the provision of school breakfast on student's health and education, it is important that a program be implemented that will provide universal breakfast to students in severe-need schools, and thereby increase utilization in this important program.

Thank you.

⁸ Cook, J., Ohri-Vachaspati, P., and Kelly, G. *Evaluation of a Universally-Free School Breakfast Program Demonstration Project*. Medford, MA, Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy, 1996.